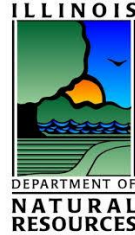


NEWS RELEASE



1021 North Grand Avenue East
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276
Phone: 217/782-3397



One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, Illinois 62702
Phone: 217/782-6302

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 16, 2015

Contacts:

Illinois EPA
Kim Biggs
Kim.Biggs@Illinois.gov
217-558-1536

Dept. of Natural Resources
Chris Young
Chris.Young@Illinois.gov
217-557-1240

Illinois EPA Refers Vermilion County Cattle Farm Operator to Attorney General for Enforcement

Agency Alleges Illegal Discharge of Livestock Waste from the Facility

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Director Lisa Bonnett has referred an enforcement action to the Illinois Attorney General's office against Gabe Shepherd, for allegedly causing, or allowing the discharge of concentrated livestock waste from the facility into Stony Creek and the Vermilion River so as to cause water pollution in Illinois. In the referral, Illinois EPA asks the Attorney General to obtain an immediate order requiring compliance measures to be taken by Mr. Shepherd.

Gabe Shepherd is named as the operator of the cattle farm, located at 4560 E. 1850 North, Fithian in Vermilion County. The facility includes several cattle feed lots and an in-ground manure collection pit, which is pumped to an aboveground tank for storage prior to land application.

On September 11, 2015, Illinois EPA received a Hazardous Materials Incident Report, reporting that a valve was left open on an aboveground manure storage tank, resulting in the release of an unknown amount of liquid cattle waste into Stony Creek. Illinois EPA inspectors were dispatched to the site and noted the open valve had allowed manure from the storage tank to backflow into the containment pit, causing the pit to overflow and discharge. The waste flowed from the pit, over land and then through a grass waterway before reaching Stony Creek. Inspection of the area identified impact several miles downstream, reaching the Salt Fork of the Vermilion River. Inspectors also observed a potential threat to the Oakwood public water supply (PWS), located seven miles downstream from the facility. The Oakwood PWS operator was notified and has kept the water intake pump off to cease pulling water from the River to protect the Village's water supply.

Illinois EPA inspectors also identified dead fish that had been impacted in the Stony Creek and the Salt Fork. Illinois Conservation Police, Illinois Department of Natural Resources fisheries (IDNR) were dispatched to the site the same day in response to the fish kill. IDNR fisheries biologists estimate the pollution affected about 10 miles of river and stream, killing fish up to the Oakwood Road bridge over the Salt Fork of the Vermilion River.

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Shepherd Referral/2

An IDNR biologist estimates 98,747 fish were killed with a value of \$24,064.33. The biologist also confirmed that at least three state-listed fish species have been killed (River Redhorse, Bigeye Chub, and Bluebreast Darter). The pollution also passed through one of the relocation sites for the federally endangered Northern Riffleshell and Clubshell mussels. The impact on the mussel population could not be determined during the fish kill investigation, as high turbidity from the pollution and above normal flow prevented visual observation of the substrate in most locations.

In the referral, Illinois EPA identified numerous violations of the Illinois Environmental Protection Act, Illinois Compiled Statutes and the Illinois Administrative Code. Illinois EPA is seeking prompt enforcement action and proper remediation of the impacted areas. Remediation activities include collection of any waste located outside of the waste management system, thorough cleaning of drainage area down gradient, and restoration of grass waterway impacted with activities to be completed by September 30.

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